

This extract may help you in the early stages. You know your dog & they may not need all the treats and many adapt quickly. The **key messages** are **patience, don't let them be scared, reward, take your time** & you'll both soon be enjoying walks again.



How to teach your dog to use a Walkin' Wheels® wheelchair Using Positive Reinforcement Training in 10 easy steps

By Kerry Kelley, CVT, CPDT. July 2010



1. First, you must use really great treat rewards such as lots (100) of small pieces of roast chicken, hot dogs or string cheese. Most dogs are highly food motivated and "*will work for food*". Dry dog kibble or cookies, carrots are not good enough rewards. You need rewards the dog will be very excited to get while you are teaching him to use his new wheelchair.
2. Work in very short (1-5) minute sessions, several times a day (4-6). Give your dog rest periods of 1-2 hours between each session. Only move on to each new step when your dog is comfortable (paying attention to you, relaxed and eating the treats) at the current step. Otherwise continue to work at the current level for a few more sessions.
3. A hungry dog is a motivated dog! Work with your dog before you have fed him a meal. He will be more eager to pay attention and earn the food rewards when he is a bit hungry.
4. Do not immediately put your dog in the wheelchair. Assemble the wheelchair and leave it in an area where your dog can see it, smell it, touch it and hear it when you move it around.
5. Give your dog the small food rewards whenever he is in the same room as the wheelchair. Feed treats quickly as in "*treat-treat-treat-treat-treat*" and praise and pat him as well.
6. If your dog shows any interest in the wheelchair let him approach it to see, smell and touch it. Keep rewarding him with the yummy treats. By offering your dog delicious food rewards when the wheelchair is near you are helping him to make a positive association between the wheelchair and great food rewards. He will be more willing to interact with the wheelchair using this method.
7. When your dog is comfortable near the wheelchair, put the front harness on him. Have someone feed your dog the delicious food rewards while you adjust the harness on him.
8. When your dog is comfortable in the front harness, try placing him in the rear support system. Continue feeding him lots of great food rewards and make your adjustments to the wheelchair.
9. Once your dog is in the wheelchair, hold the food rewards right at his nose level. Feed him several pieces. Then move the food reward an inch from his nose and let him eat it. Move the next food reward another inch from his nose and let him eat it. Repeat. At some point your dog will have to stretch his neck out in order to take the food reward.
10. Continue moving the food rewards further out, inch by inch, in front of your dog's nose and at some point he will have to take a step forward in order to get the food reward. When he takes a step make a big fuss over his success! Feed him lots of food rewards and tell him he is the best and brightest dog in the world! Continue to offer him treats to keep him moving forward in the wheelchair. At this point your dog should be more comfortable in the wheelchair and should be on his way to walking in his new *Walkin' Wheels®*